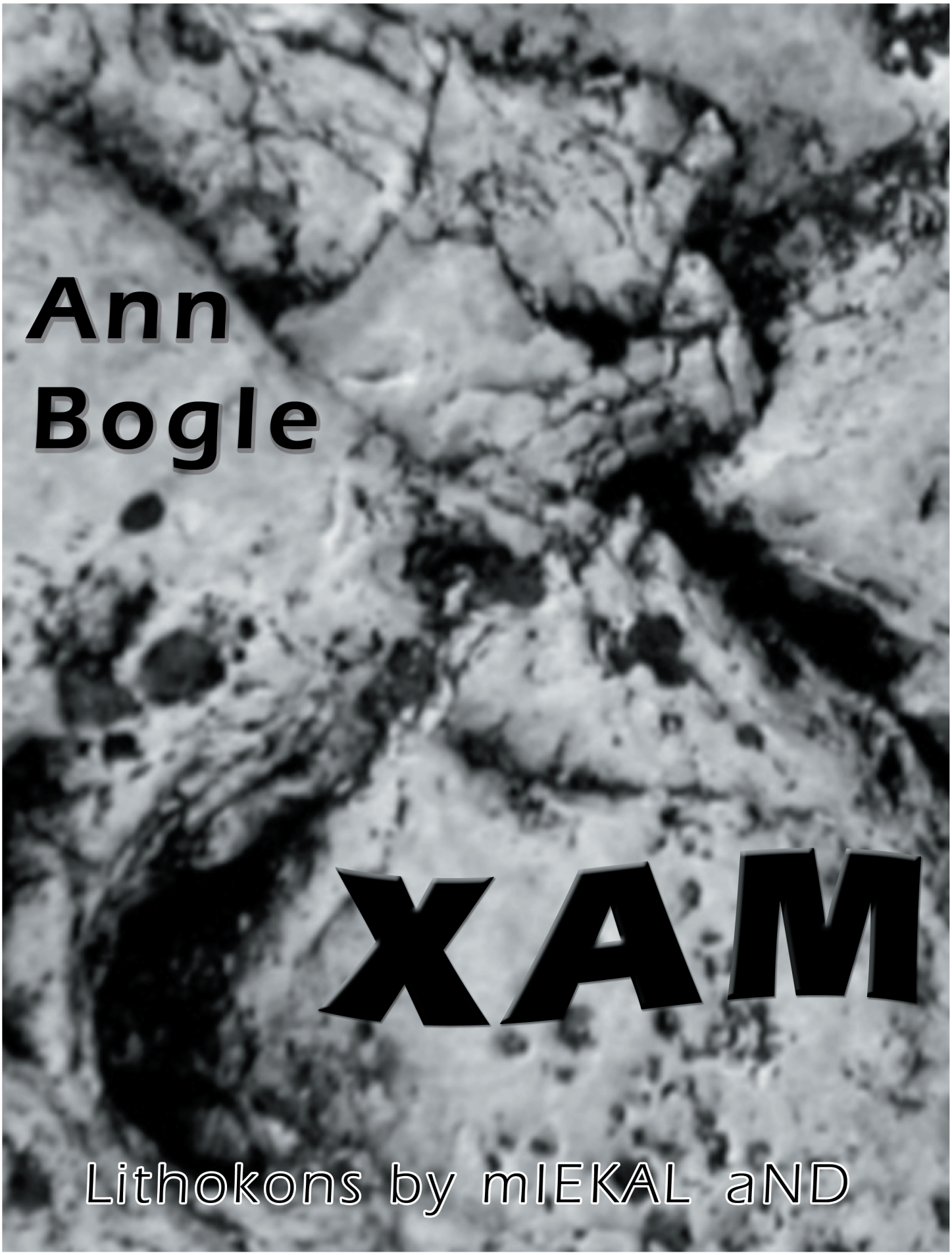
Ann
Bogle
XAM
Lithokons by mIEKAL aND

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by Ann Bogle

LITHOKONS BY MIEKAL AND

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XAM: Paragraph Series by Ann Bogle (1998)

When I wrote XAM: Paragraph Series in 1998, I was in those cities and locations cited in the headers of these passages. I see the pieces as related prose poems—not as verses, per se, not as short stories, and not as essays or essayettes. A prose poem, as I have practiced it, is two pages or fewer in length and uses language, rather than temporal events, as the first given. Glimpses of action, person (not as in fiction, "character"), and scene may also appear in them. Prose poems are less calculating than fiction and less tightly crafted than a short story or short poem; they are less pre-meditated. Perhaps they are more rhythmic. My friend, Michael J. Kelly, admitted to finding the rhythms in XAM to be difficult to follow. It reminds me that rhythm is something also personal. The best rhythmic writing would be "beatest." Yuan is my codeword for today.

Janet Malcolm writes in her essay in The New Yorker about Gertrude Stein (June 13 & 20, 2005) that hardly a soul has read Gertrude Stein's work straight through. I, for one, like her rhythms and variant repetitions, but, yes, I am guilty of mere dropping in on her writings when the mood hits me. I read some, like taking one apple from a tree, polishing it on my sleeve, and eating it, rather than picking all the apples, herding them into my sweatshirt, and standing there until I have eaten them all, a pig or a cow on apples.

I was concerned not to let this series of prose poems (vaguely about AA, cinema, and madness) go out to dressed-up people who are too dressy ever to be ill or of their acting sure that illness plays auteur. Illness doesn't write poems, I would say to them, the dressy, classed-up detractors. So much for reputation—gossip, slander, praise.

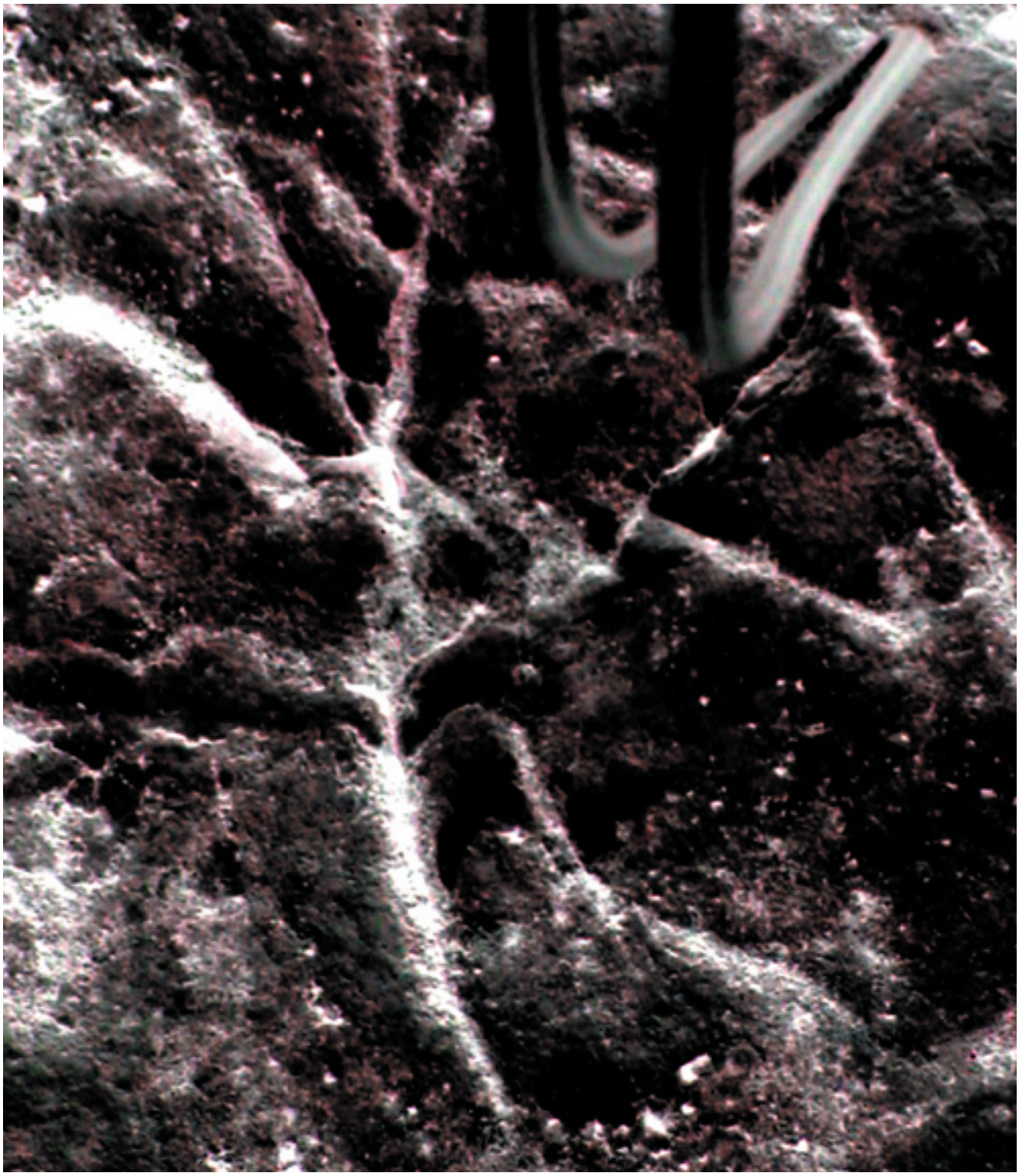
—ANN BOGLE
Minnetonka, Minnesota
August 14, 2005

XAM, PARAGRAPH, May 22, 1998, Houston, Texas

Day One: Letter
The letter for today is "x."
Day One (continued): Syllable
The syllable for today is "am."

PARAGRAPH
Context: Sound (Setting)
: "Xam"

The "letter for today" are 26 with unmarked umlauts and accents, the Minnesota diphthongs we mock while mocking ourselves for talking Texas. Fringe. The letter for today was "f." Freezing, friggin' frigid temperatures. Mittens, hat. Long "a," sideways: "a"-squat. The letter for yesterday was "s," often mistaken for "f" on the telephone, out of context: "f" as in "Frank" because one would not say "srank"; "s" as in "Sam" because there is no such thing as "fam." We took the fam to the zoo. We forgot to eat this morning, so we were all fam. Frank Sinatra was the most fam of all the lounge singers (in a big way). One would not say, "We took the Sam to the zoo," or, "We forgot to eat this morning, so we were all Sam." One would not say, "Frank Sinatra was the most Sam of all the lounge singers (in a big way)."



GOMPLEX

OILSPILL, PARAGRAPH, June 1, 1998, Anywhere, USA

The alcohol spread through my life like an oilspill. AA was like clean-up from the Exxon Valdez and as long. Cleaners at the Exxon Valdez buy human hair to make oil cleaning ropes. This is not the Holocaust, where the Nazis killed the people and sold the hair. This is the drunk ship captain who spilled a century's worth of oil on a single duck named Pal. It will take 2,000 salons' worth of daily hair for the next twenty years to supply enough hair to clean Pal up. Am I like the drunk ship captain who spilled crude oil on my own life? (The captain had a disease, too. It was in the papers. Subtext: not his fault. Subtext: needed help.) Pal needs help, more help than the captain. Smart thing to do: Cut your hair. Alcoholics everywhere are donating hair in the AA salons of the nation to soak up the oil spill, the alcohol, that killed the duck of our companions. Dig deeply, dream.

BIG, PARAGRAPH, June 3, 1998

Boy, went. Boy was. Boy charmed. Boy bought. Boy sold. Boy bet. Boy told. Boy lost. Boy lives. Boy dies. Boy cries. Boy has boy. Boy has sun. Boy has fever, binoculars, pairs of pants, pictures of big arrows. Does he blunt them? Boy begs a sweet from sorrow. Boy tongues her aster. Boy dials Big Girl for old times. She's a big ol' girl. Got her priorities straight. Comes in ones, fives, tens, twenties, fifties, hundreds. She loves the denominations like children. Shot crank straight through three pregnancies and slaps them silly to make them stop spinning. God loves her. That's who God is. She loves Boy the day his mother dies and the money is his. Little Girl loves him because he doesn't love her, and he loves Big Girl for all the times she made him cry. Now he's drinking his way home. Boy grows to Big Boy with one chemical omission. Little Girl acts drunk a little longer. Little Girl no spender. Little Girl no earner. Little Girl no gambler. Little Girl drip dry under the table by Boy to Big Boy. Little Girl outzipped by Big Girl. Big Girl powerful in her prostituting and her men stay steady. Little Girl lost her big not trying men on for size. Felt sorry for her sins. Boy to Big Boy calls Little Girl a whore, shrinks her. Little Girl looks to the sky, her favorite ceiling, calls down the planets and tells God that she should have gypped him, darn it. God, in His wisdom, says nothing.

WATERWORLD, PARAGRAPH, May 30, 1998, Minnetonka, Minnesota

"We don't use much alcohol 'round here."

Become, par. 2, drenched in a willingness to be out of here, the earthly frame, "our" "life" frittered on the distance, our solitude conducted in full sight of man-with-the-codpiece, shamed to a willingness to be a doctor of knowing, twice, sentenced to flail in a certainty beyond tolerance or acceptance, null, void, other zero words that add up to Mount Everest, in the movie, the last tip of land still visible when they drop, in their crude hydraulics, the final technical achievement, to begin again to learn to like meat and other vegetables. Sprung.

clock

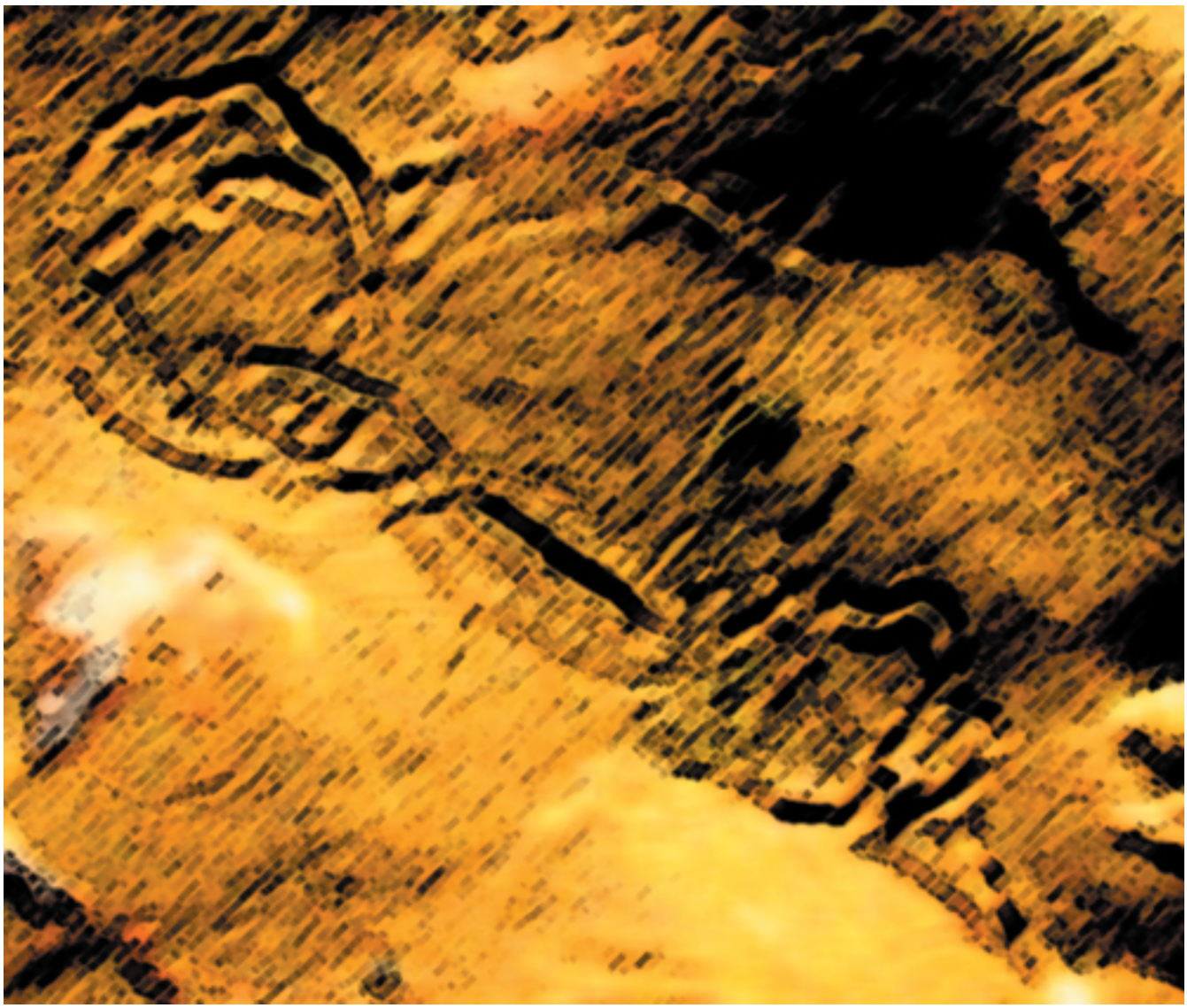
WAS, PARAGRAPH, May 31, 1998, Minnetonka, Minne-was-to-ya

Was, same as Sam, was fertile, was linx, was wily, was scorn. Sam, man about town, not a big man, Sam, a salt-and-pepper lady's man, Samland, husband beef, sick issuer of women's grief, hairless in most places, happier than many, overindulged, wicked. How wicked? And what is grief? Grief is to have given freely too unfreely. Grief is to have given one year too many. Wicked is to have wanted it to be given away that way. Wicked is to Sam as duty is to Mother. Sam's wife is to his friend's wife as one Mercedes to another. Sam's face du jour est Belle. Was was duly impressed.

lithopod

THEN, PARAGRAPH, June 1, 1998, Mtka., Minn.

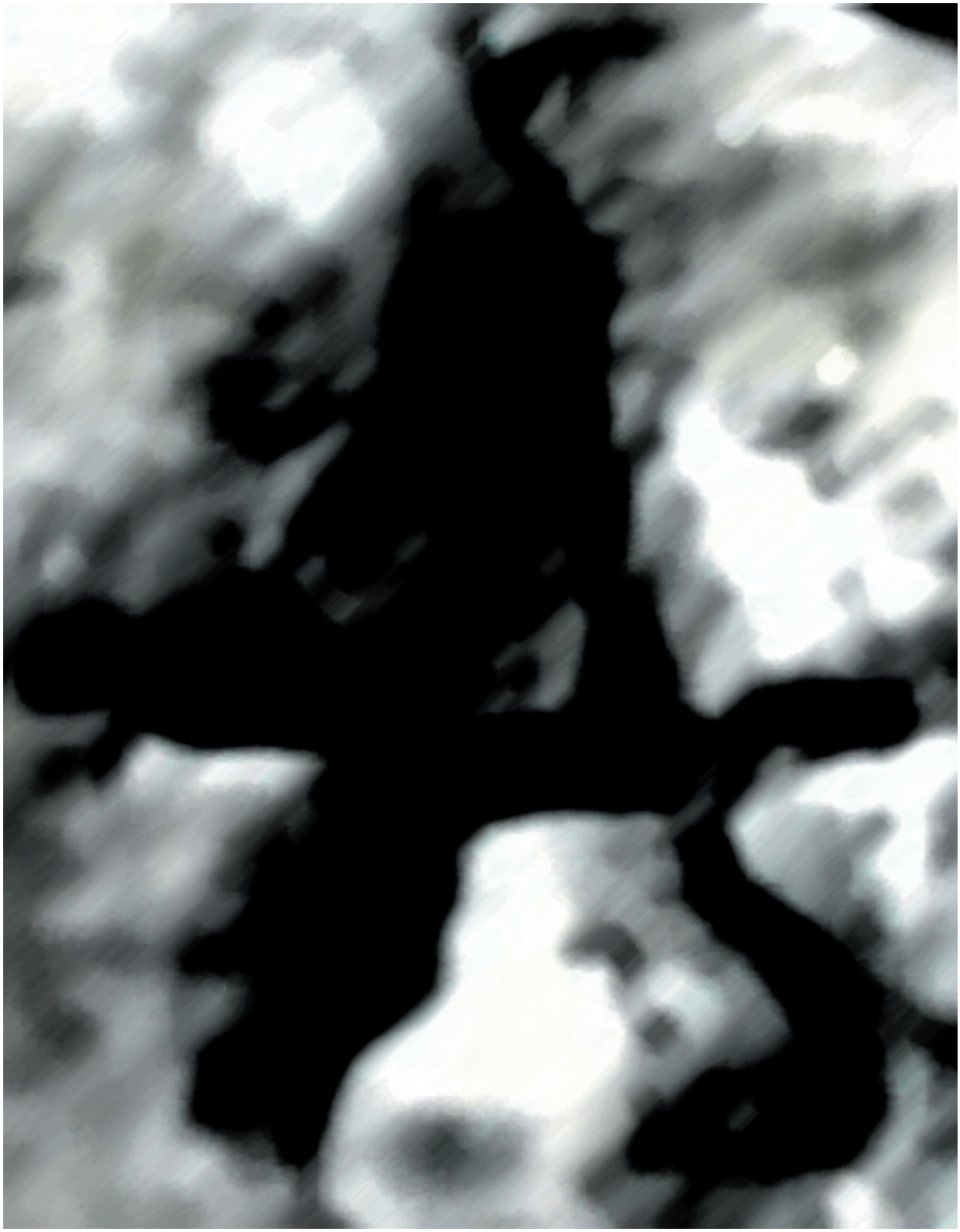
Was was not acquainted with Sam of the wandering spectacles, married to Triste, spent on Spam——one piece of darkly marbled Spam well-oiled among rolling peas. This constitutes a dark childhood memory. Was was beyond Spam, never beyond Triste, outnumbered by Sam, their hearts set on Fixadent, must live to need it. Love? The big wappatui party at the lake cabin when the most popular boy who had ever talked to her, about the 14th most popular, threw up all over the car seat and dropped to 17th by the end of that weekend, Heck. Had she loved Heck without reason then? Not a turn-key child nor even a turn-key teenager. Not named Was in the beginning, named Iz. Go back and love that girl. Go back and love her again.



TURBINE

DEATH IS A GOOD THING, PARAGRAPH, October 9, 1998

What his name was, Spanish Wind. Sparking his disease at the last moment of the last century in the last millennium. Believing too many media knew his wherefores. Charging top dollar to stay in the Rent Puzzle. Owning nothing but his insecticide feelers. For instance. Let's see what he remembers. (Look, look, look, look.) Aha, he remembers everything. Drugs drag him into further worry. He remembers nothing. He remembers one visualization. Divided head, body, shaft of neck. Di means two. Distributed head, body, stem of neck. Fallible warning system. Personal effects. The white coat people lock up his personal effects and take the steering wheel where he is arrested. They take his weekend. There is some disorientation. There is genuine mental illness. He is not like us. He is not like himself, either. There must be someone else living inside him. Is he Jesus? Is he a president? Is he——wouldn't it be great if he could be deluded that he is a great cook? Why must he be deluded, for all his child abuse, that he is a specter? Couldn't we let him win once? Couldn't we say, he has a point there? Couldn't we sit beside him at the great Clock Counting and observe that he is fair? What if he wants to be good at citizenship? What if he slips into periods of low achievement so easily that he becomes good at that? He becomes good at dopa sniffing. He's not married. If he cooked, he'd be married. If he knew how to steer, he'd be one in her intelligent book alike contest. He has one chance to hit the waste basket with the crumpled candy bar wrapper. He faced the devil and lost his punch. He has lost his billfold so many times, he comes out shining. He opens over to the onion. He is not sicker than you. He is not sicker than you. He is not sicker than you.



A to the power

DAY, PARAGRAPH, June 24, 1998

I ate the wrong factory. I starved the biggest shrimp. I swamped the aerodynamic tunaboat. I filed the wrong divorce. I clutched the first swami. I killed the flying exeter. I turtlenecked the simoned citizen. I belched at the pause in the aria. I licked into even your own cavities. I coughed Pulitzer. I prized the damned I bought marble sundae fruitcake. I illed the twin fruit bevel. I carried over to magazines. I spied on the twelve handsome. I buried his oven mistakes. I took wafers from the hands of Israel. I spilled nut grease. I must have known all this. I must have felt this way before. I must have wanted to know how time flies alone. I must have felt I knew. I must have come on like a weed storm in the "d"of winter. I whipped you boy into the shape of your aforesaid. For a pile of dough. A gift to take you to the holy land. Did you see me coming? Did you take me at my word?

Did you spell my relief in your clouds? Did you smile at the Absurdities? Did you eat my naked raw meat adjacent to your wilderness? Did you borrow one more windsock to darn a little longer? Did you buy all my suicide? Did you feast on my empty? Did you sail in my foot peddle? This is as I told the story to my sister when she cried.

wormgram

ANY VIN, PARAGRAPH, July 4, 1998, 2:07-3:06 p.m. CDT, with one cigarette break, 625 words

Were 8, were faux, were big little sorrels, were New, were were, were forced, were fallen, were figs, were vampires, were fickle, were first, were middle, were latent, were ladykillers, wee dicks, in out of here to for across up down dial ONE taste of the matter for JULY for 13 six tongues will you remember me? I will remember you. I will sow your rapier sword for my bag of nine. This burly ive. This wronged number. This love of chain saws. My biggest accomplishment was my dalliance. My favorite inventory was my love. My your. Your my. How we do this apart. How we shoot first and knock later. How every air seeks any air for your unrecollected nest egg. Take me camping. Take me to the ear boys for my total surrender. I'll keep my hat. I'll keep my legs. I'll keep my long long torso and my neck. I'll keep my breasts. I'll keep my stone fucker. I'll keep my wicked candle. I'll die down on the farm. I'll live in the city. I'll buy you a car. I'll buy you a buy you a buy you a buy you already know what I bought you. It is a big one. Big is better. Big is necessary. Big is for big men. Big is bigger than snails. Big is for the whole fucking field. Here he come to be a gib gib gib gib turkey. What's fun? You know what fun is to me? I like typing. I like moving my shoulders. I like looking at that guy Mike in the anger management support group whose wife is suspicious. If you saw him, you would be suspicious, too. Of his oh-yes, of his lady looks. Of his man frame. Of his having traveled this far to trouble you, all the way from Baltimore. Hair brown. Feverfew. This is for a computer that I write this. I'll give you all my money, but you can't have my heart. Or my soul. Or my spirit. I know. We were to share. We did share. Now I want it all skilled. Here's a little Eiffel Tower for your soup. I love you, I love you, I love you. What love is worth that? All love is long love. All love is love of God love. All love makes war look like courtship.

All love makes men tall. All love makes women small. All love makes children seek out the O-door. All love makes the animals of first importance, more important than free range itself. By all means, by any means, buy ANY 713 with ANN 652, buy hubfish. This southern belle hemisphere where the toilet water rolls around the other way. This first look at you. This first song for me. This 31-year blowjob projectile. To you! To big you! To my role in life. I would have sucked you toward heaven had you sold me for less. My loss is my lesson, my letzen my lesen. Went to a wedding, talked to the photographer. Talked to the band. Talked to the minister. Talked to the nervous bridegroom. Talked to the permanently bored bride. Talked to the bride's mother whose job it was to raise a raised daughter. Talked to the bridegroom's dad whose idea it was to fake the lost- cause bride. This was the balloon riding to the sky on wings of you. Red flags at the window at the side of the house at the corners of the house. Power for days. Flowers everywhere. Mice presenting themselves dead at the sliding glass door. Baby sparrow not lifting anymore. Then suddenly lifting when I lifted. Tires. Jog years. Cheers.

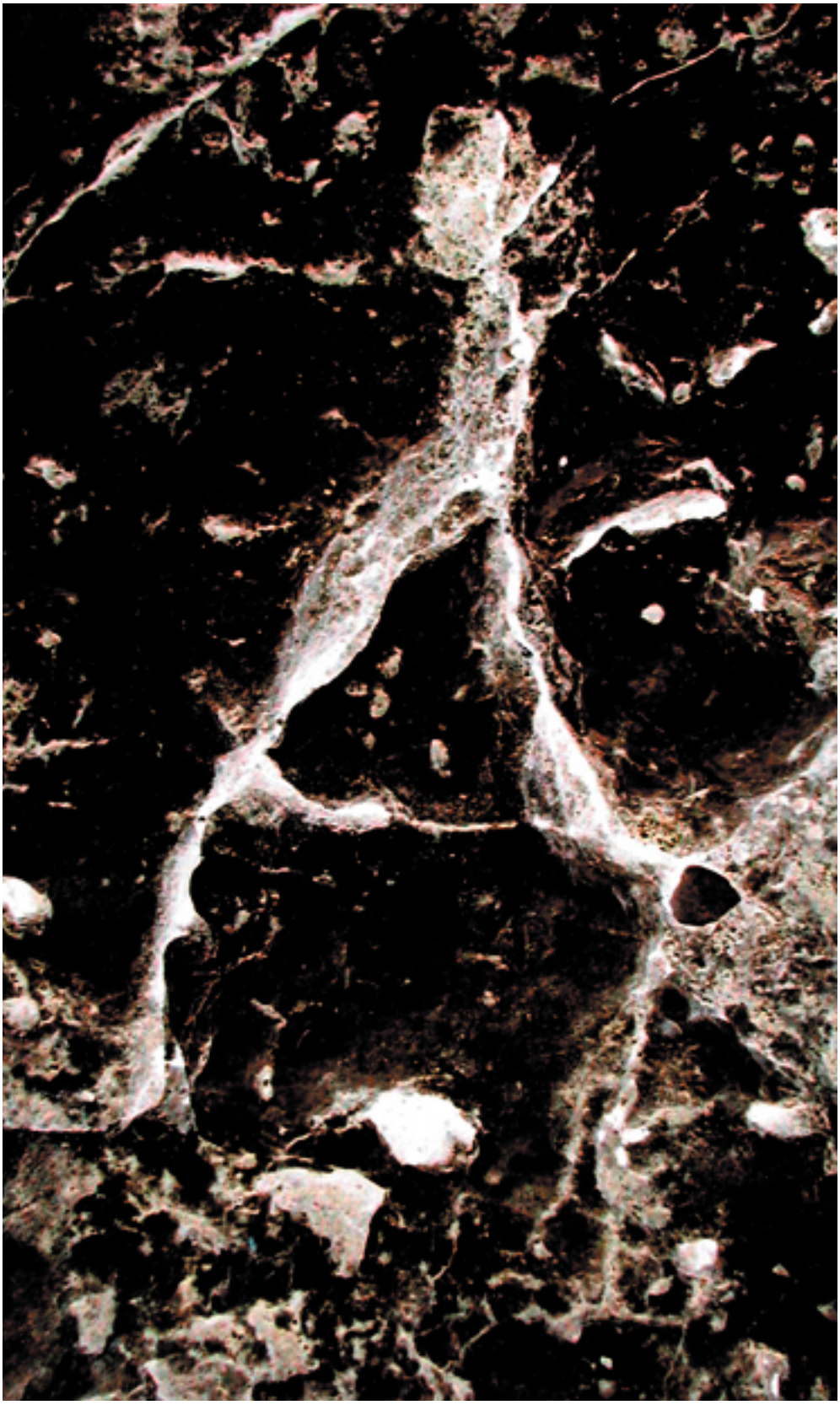
A FASCINATION WITH SEX, APPARENTLY, PARAGRAPH, July 29, 1998

The mumman [mumbled word] was drinking coffee and thinking of the 12 orange sisters of her tabby cat, Lucy, also orange, also female. They said orange cats are usually men. Here was Lucy, the tiniest of the full-grown miniatures, with brains and a heart. She crouched steadily in her years, 14. Her hind legs a little frosted. Her fur a little spotted. Her love at an endless arch toward recommending herself for retirement. Don't die, Lucy. Never die. A companion with a recorded history. She used to socialize, and now she mostly rests. She used to sit on men. When she travels, she leaps from bed to bed, across the narrow hotel divide, and from one high thing to another. Her brother is handsome and delightfully normal. He travels to the countries of each tree, each folded fern, eats each fallen bird, each plummeting mouse, fills his mouth with feathers and fluff and bloody eyes. Fran. Cis. They talk as friends and fight; they slip into 69 fighting position and kick like mad, letting out one phrase in serious, overlapping undertones. They spread news to kazoos.

Phallow

ENCUCUMBERED, PARAGRAPH, August 7, 1998, Mtka, MN 55345

The man drove on eyezine. The man courted the other man, and the women courted him. In the magnetic literature of the 19th century, he was a homosexual. A fag. A homo. A creep. A queer. He had not wanted one look at her. Titty bars did nothing for him. He went to hear the talk. He got hard (it got hard) when he thought of hard reality. He turned into a fairy one day at dusk. The woman had given all her man out. No more man in her to give. Had to move on, he said. Thank you for letting me suck you bone dry suicide. You're welcome, she added. She was not one for carrying unfinished business in her scrapbook. He allied himself with the three women from the movie. They were for him. He was for the other him. No one would get the best of him. This was his 77th movie. He was very bad and good at it. He turned in his identification bracelet at the state crossing. He missed reading Wallace Stephens——Wallace Stephens, Wallace Stephens, a Latin phrase. Ever since, because of it maybe, he was lazy, inactive. He had a public life as a guitar player but could not play in front of people. The new she was shirking her duties at work, thinking it was temporary, thinking work was permanent, thinking her duties as a mother were not so very heavy. After all, he was paying her to think, but she had not thought that yet. In some years, something would remind her.



alphalith

FIRST HOSTAGE, PARAGRAPH, September 17, 1998

When is your birthday? Do you know when your birthday was? Were you there? Were you married? Do you know when your wedding was? Were you there? My husband is a shapeshifter who borrowed a cloud from a star to espy my formal lodgings. I could never tell when he was with me and when he was elsewhere. The kind of marriage I am speaking of is not exclusive. The kind of marriage I am speaking about is mental roughshod. He enjoys it more than any act of local love, more than any single moment in a humble day, more even than watching his son's face grow up. It is a criminal substitute for breaking actual laws. They never place the tariff on the unsucked milk. They never ask a man to borrow money he can't repay. They never give up on his version of the view. They never tell him that enough is enough. He is more active in the economy than even the industrious rich man. He is more sure of his resources than the mildest bank teller. He borrowed verse from wind. He sold shrapnel from starting over. He kissed frog upon frog upon frog. He turned a beautiful, milk-rich woman to a toad. He turned another beautiful, milk-rich, foreign woman to a sea gypsy. She turned him on her tiny finger. She told his story in French so that something could be true for someone. He regretted not finding that mother tongue sooner. ETC. He did each thing with deliberation. He discovered each soft spot with special veneration. He aspired to undetectable crimes. But everyone knew, and they laughed jovially in the empty theater.

WIFE, PARAGRAPH, October 6, 1998, Mtka., MN

Then we were saying how unordinary this woman is: She wrote a note on pink notepaper allowing her husband to seek sex elsewhere, as long, she wrote, as long as he came home at night. Love, smily face, your wife. We were saying this is an unusual situation. I said, “She must be a national curiosity.” Already people in five states had heard about it. Someone said, “He must be a boy genius.” I said, “If he shows the note to too many people, he will lose his genius.” Someone else said, “She's just giving him the rope,"and my old boyfriend said, “That's one controlling motherfucker, sure.” The man with the permission slip showed the note to me. I was trying to see her as big-of-her and me as how-could-I——not our final examination haircolors. It was Aquarian Man at his best [explain].

DELVE, PARAGRAPH, October 24, 1998

Fooling your eyes, setting traps for your memory, designing your mood. This was the day for cleaning the house. This was the day for writing a story. This was the day for walking to the lake. This was the day for celebrating a little hair. This was the day for timing the errands. This was the day for testing up on Lucy. This was the day for remembering the b'cy, what that lesson was FOR. This was the day for deciding the many. This was the day for dialing the any. This was the day for one, two, three, four, for carving a pumpkin, destroying a costume, filing separate sorrows in files marked: MEN'S NAMES. This was the day for not talking too much. This was the day for listening. This was the day for praying about the car. This was the day for not checking e-mail. This was the day for bending low to pick the leaves off the carpet. This was the day for remembering sterile things. This was the day for not wanting someone. This was the day for wanting someone better. This was the day for wanting to be someone. This was the day for wanting to be someone better. What a yellow leaf. What oraculars. What downtown tennis shoes. What a vamp for arch dryness. What staring into best and that in particular. What a lot of confessional pupils. In this way, in this way, in this way.

curse

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